

Sirs:

The proposal to remove limitations on media ownership undermines the fundamental concept that the public airwaves are just that: public. The consolidation of media ownership to an even more limited few will stifle the diversity of opinions and debate available on the public airwaves. As a specific example, I point to the virtual lack of media reporting about this issue in a manner that explains the fundamental impact to citizens.

Some would claim that this is a step forward in de-regulation. It is not. It is regulating media ownership only to those that have the financial backing to acquire limited portions of the public broadcast spectrum. True deregulation would allow anyone to put up a transmitter of any power anywhere, and let the most powerful transmitter win. I'm sure nearby air traffic control systems and law enforcement communications would not appreciate full deregulation in that manner.

It is obvious that the public airwaves must be regulated and disguising reform of the rules as "deregulation" is a red herring. These are OUR airwaves and they should be chartered with serving the public good. In fact, we need to restore previously rolled back regulations that require a certain percentage of "public service" broadcasting. The elimination of those requirements is partially responsible for network "news" divisions being transferred to the entertainment divisions of the big media conglomerates. I'm sure the likes of Walter Cronkite and Edward R. Murrow would have walked out on such an arrangement.

The media companies will respond with "We're just giving consumers what they want" and to a certain extent that's true. The problem with that position, however, is that we are not "consumers"; We are CITIZENS. Citizens must be informed and they must be informed in a manner that accurately presents the facts. This is but one of the many responsibilities we must impose upon those to whom we lease the use of our airwaves.

I urge you -- Do NOT relax the regulation of broadcast media; Tighten it. Pushing ownership of media back into local hands will improve the economic outlook for media in general. After all, the vast majority of economic power: employment, taxes and community involvement, come from small businesses. There is a logical incentive to promote small business participation in media ownership for both diversity and freedom of speech and economic reasons.

Thank you for your time.
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